

FATALGRAM 26-04

Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development
Division of Labor & Safety Standards
Occupational Safety & Health



Date of incident: July 30, 2026,

Industry: Construction

Location: Delta Junction, Alaska

Summary: Two maintenance employees of a local medical clinic were tasked with replacing a septic tank inside a trench when they were fatally injured by a sidewall collapse.

Description of Accident: The employees were laying pipe in a trench that lacked any protective systems; no benching, sloping, or trench box was in use. While work was underway, a trench sidewall suddenly failed and buried both individuals.

Emergency responders conducted a technical rescue and used an excavator to remove the heavy soil covering the workers. After rescue personnel determined the trench was safe to enter, the workers were recovered and pronounced deceased at the site.

Accident Prevention Recommendations:

- Ensure cave-in protective systems (benching, sloping, or trench box) are in place for trenches/excavations over 5 feet in depth.
- Ensure regular inspections are performed by a competent person to evaluate soil/trench conditions for signs of deterioration and after any occurrence that could have changed conditions in the trench.
- Only utilize trained personnel to attempt rescue in emergencies.
- Ensure spoil piles are at least two feet away from trench edges
- Beware of vibration sources from equipment and roadway traffic operating in the area that may increase stress on trench walls.